



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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NEWS RELEASE

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Proposed watershed restoration project will benefit Cape Cod, according to report

Draft environmental impact statement available for public review and comment

AMHERST, Mass. -- A major water resources restoration project proposed for Cape Cod will have long-term beneficial effects on the region and no significant detrimental effects, according to a draft environmental impact statement released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The public is invited to review and comment on the draft statement by September 8, 2006. The "Cape Cod Water Resources Restoration Project Draft Watershed Plan and Areawide Environmental Impact Statement" is available on-line at www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov. Copies have also been sent to the public library main branch in each Cape Cod town.

NRCS, in partnership with the Cape Cod Conservation District and the Barnstable County Commissioners, is proposing the Cape Cod Water Resources Restoration Project to restore degraded salt marshes and obstructed fish passages, and improve water quality at sites throughout Cape Cod.

The proposed project will restore 1,500 acres of degraded salt marsh, improve fish access to 4,200 of spawning habitat, and improve water quality for 7,300 acres of shellfish beds. Short-term economic benefits are expected, as well, from the creation of construction jobs.

Only minor short-term adverse impacts are anticipated, which could include noise at construction sites and traffic disruptions. Construction periods at specific sites would be short, ranging from a week to a couple of months.

An estimated \$15-20 million in federal planning, technical and cost-share assistance will be provided through NRCS's Small Watershed Program, which targets watersheds less than 250,000 acres. Local communities will share in construction costs. The plan and environmental impact statement, prepared by the Cape Cod Conservation District with assistance by NRCS, will require final approval by Congress before federal assistance is authorized.

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“Shellfish beds on the Cape are often closed for extensive periods during the year because of poor water quality,” said Lee Davis, chair of the Cape Cod Conservation District. “Storm water runoff is a significant source of pollution. Salt marsh degradation and barriers that interfere with the migration of fish are also a concern.”

“The watershed plan includes conservation improvements to be implemented over a period of years,” said Donald Liptack, District Conservationist for the local NRCS office in Hyannis. “We need public input to ensure that the plan is physically, environmentally, socially and economically sound.”

The Cape Cod Conservation District and Barnstable County Commissioners are the lead sponsors of the project, working in partnership with federal, state and local agencies, as well as all Barnstable County towns. NRCS will be the lead technical assistance agency.

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